

Contributions

A FUNERAL SERMON

R. R. TEETER

"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Heb. 13:14.

These words sum up what was certainly the Apostolic mind as to the position of Christians, or for that matter the position and circumstances of any human being in this world.

Men are members of a vast, and powerful, and complex association which we call human society.

Human society, with its recognized laws is one of the great things of the universe; it is one of the deepest subjects for human thought; it possesses attributes worthy of the closest attention of the world's greatest minds. There are other questions that are attracting widespread attention and challenging critical investigation; but I can conceive of no vaster or more sublime field for noble effort, for in it are found attributes that are divine.

But with all its great attributes, it wants one—it wants permanence. The world passes away, is passing away as we work and speak; and more each day, each year as we grow in knowledge and wisdom, and come to a better understanding of the world and its relation to man, are we made to realize that we have no continuing city here? But tho this is true, yet we do seek one to come.

Born amid change, surrounded by change in every form, knowing nothing by experience but change, the subject and the sport of change, the human heart yet obstinately clings to its longing for the unchanging and the eternal. This longing has assumed vague forms in various ages and among different people, but the principle, altho sometimes almost unutterable may be considered universal. Christian souls, thru the Apostle, not only long for it, but look for it with fondest anticipations. We seek that which is to come, seek it by believing that we shall one day reach it.

"Here have we no continuing city," that is on earth. Those Hebrews who clung to the earthly sanctuary as their only source of happiness or their only means of salvation are representatives of all who cling with tenacity to this earth. The earthly Jerusalem which was a thing of adoration to them, yea, almost a thing of worship, proved to be no "abiding city," having been destroyed shortly after this Epistle to the Hebrews was written, and with its fall, fell the Jewish civil and religious polity; a type of the whole of our present earthly order of things soon to perish.

We are all of us under the unalterable necessity of change in one way or other. It is not because we will it to be so, or because it is our desire that it should be so, neither have we the power to make it otherwise no matter how great an effort we may put forth. It is the absolute condition of existing now

and here. By taking one thorough look thru the kaleidoscope of the history of ages we are made to feel how radical is the change. The rise and fall, the variations of form and feature, the supremacy or total annihilation of nations is but a working out of this principle. But one nation seemed to be the exception to this principle, standing alone from centuries before the Christian era until quite recently, when even China was compelled to submit to the inevitable law of change.

The fact that we have no continuing city here and are subject to unalterable laws of change may affect or impress us in many ways; it may darken or it may brighten life; it may depress or discourage, or it may inspire with undying hope. We may find in it the highest summons to courage or the excuse for the most enervating sentimentalism. Our life may be darkened because we are self-centered and self-satisfied, having no thought for anything higher or nobler than self, fearing that any change will rob us of present pleasure or abiding happiness. Tho this may be the result of our entertaining thoughts relating to this important principle, it does not alter it, nor does it prove it to be arbitrary, for the effect it produces on us is not the fault of the law, but rather the faulty relation we hold to the law.

On the other hand this thought may brighten our life by helping us to understand that the failures and disappointments of this earth life are not eternal, and that, tho many social and personal matters are not what we would wish, there is a future in which the first shall be last and the last shall be first, or in other words where the right arrangement of a perverted and misplaced series shall be made. This then is a high summons to courage. We need more courage. When we are made to feel, as we all are without any exception, that "here we have no continuing city," or permanent abiding place, it requires a heroic spirit to prevent one from quailing in the presence of the thought. But the added words of the Apostle, "we seek after the city which is to come," supply all our need.

Practical life has no place for a weak sentimentalism, and as God in His infinite wisdom has provided through his Son the complement of man's life, it is clearly seen that in what we call a religious or Christian life there is no room for this idle sentimentalism. There is much that is unsatisfactory in the life of man, but a right understanding of God will put it all to rights. In the book of Psalms this truth may be easily traced. The idea of the sovereignty of God is the counterpart thru-out the Psalms set over against all that is unsatisfying, disastrous, transitory, untrustworthy, not only in man's condition, but in the best that he can do. The character portrayed in the lives of ancient Israel is not that of perfect men. The Psalmists do not hold themselves up before the future generations as model men after whom it would be safe for one to pattern. The Psalms are always the expression of the will to fulfil God's purpose, tho very often of

that will baffled; but they always fall back when the will is baffled, not on despair, but on the conviction that men's lives are in the hands of God. The Psalmists cast themselves into the arms of God, and then were blessed. Oh that we could catch something of the contagion of that faith and hope as many times in life we repeat again and again their wonderful words! Search as we will, travel the whole world thru, investigate every theory advanced by mortal man, seek for a foundation even to the uttermost parts of the earth, we can find nothing to rest upon, nothing that will endure the real trial but faith in the eternal kingdom of God, the faith of the Psalmists and Prophets of old lit up by the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, the faith of men who are not afraid to meet their real circumstances, who are not afraid to trust in longing and self-surrender. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The last clause of the text particularly describes the condition of Christ's people here in this present world.

During the earthly ministry of our blessed Savior he took great pains to have His followers come to right conclusions about life and eternity. He was emphatic in his declarations against one's living for time and generous in his commendation of one's living for eternity. We do not want to think of man as only a creature of time; it is heart rending to think of this earth and its life as the limit and end of man. We thank God for the revelation He has made concerning Himself thru His Son Jesus. And we rejoice in the many promises of Jesus for a future happy life. Jesus taught lessons to the world that it had never learned before, and the world is made better because of His having lived in it, and no better principles of life can be propounded. And Paul certainly expressed a thought as true as the divine, when he wrote "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Why? Because "Here we have no continuing city," and need to feel that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And because Christ is risen from the dead, and became the first fruits of them that slept, we are more willing to submit to the fact that "Here we have no continuing city," and are more than glad to exchange the earthly Zion for the new Jerusalem even tho our journey leads us thru death and the grave, for then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory thru our Lord Jesus Christ."

I feel that I would not be true to my calling did I not use this opportunity to speak words in favor of our Savior and to urge upon all the great privilege and duty of hearty service. This is no new thought or a passing sentiment, but a principle that lies at the foundation of all true human society. The